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ISSUE 10 $10.00

AUSTRALIA

Lucas leads the way

"Let's make Brisbane a World Cup fortress"

INSIDE...

MICHAEL THWAITE
QLD football's here to stay

CLINT BOLTON
Remembers his debut day

FARINA & ZULLO
Australia's winged wonders

PLUS...

CRAIG MOORE
Why he's returning to the Roos

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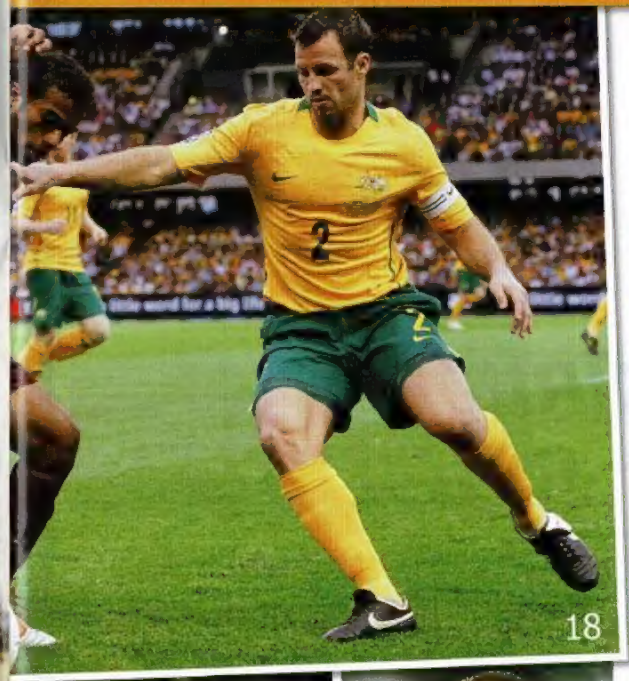
CONTENTS



the SOCCEROO

5 FIFA PRESIDENT, MR SEPP BLATTER

7 AFC PRESIDENT, MR MOHAMED BIN HAMMAM

9 FFA CHAIRMAN MR FRANK LOWY AC

11 ON THE BALL NEWS

14 EARLY ROUND REVIEW - AFC FIFA WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

18 LUCAS NEILL SPEAKS AHEAD OF TONIGHT'S CLASH

24 QUEENSLAND'S FAVOURITES LOOK NORTH FOR INSPIRATION

28 QATAR'S PROMISING FOOTBALL FUTURE

34 AUSTRALIA AND QATAR THE LINE-UPS

36 MEET THE SOCCEROOS

44 CRAIG MOORE ON WHY HE'S BACK WITH THE SOCCEROOS

50 FARINA AND ZULLO - PAST AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

53 MY SOCCEROO DEBUT - CLINT BOLTON

54 GOLDEN MOMENT - HARRY KEWELL

57 UP NEXT: BAHRAIN

58 MATCH SCHEDULE, ROUND FOUR QUALIFIERS

61 HALF-TIME QUIZ

63 FAN FOCUS

66 NUMBER CRUNCH

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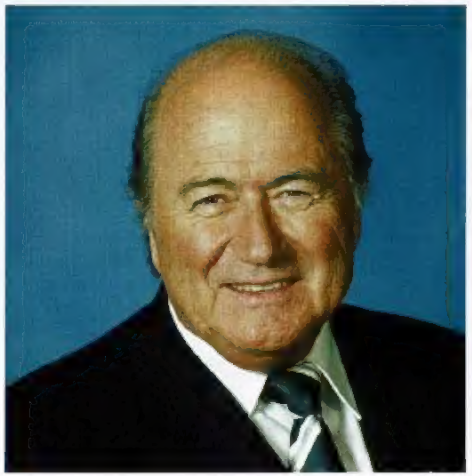

FIFA

SOUTH AFRICA AWAITS 2010

"South African hearts and minds are full of excited anticipation ahead of football's greatest tournament"

Welcome to the final round of the Asian qualifiers for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the AFC for its organisation of the matches, but also to the authorities, sponsors, numerous volunteers and fans who are supporting these qualifiers, which are very important throughout Asia.

As you can see, Asian football has progressed rapidly in the last few years. I congratulate the teams that have qualified for the final round. I hope that they play their best football and uphold the spirit of fair play while aiming to qualify for the much-coveted FIFA World Cup. Every team wants to win on the pitch, qualify and grab their ticket for South Africa. However, the most important thing is to give your all.

I kindly ask all sportsmen, officials and fans to remember that promoting sportsmanship is synonymous with promoting ethical values, and in this respect, every player, every referee and every fan can lead by example. Players and supporters, play to win and enjoy yourselves, but accept defeat with dignity – that is the lesson football teaches us every single day. To respect the laws of the game, your opponents, team members, referees and spectators is to respect yourself.

The winners of this final round will have every reason to celebrate, as they will be taking part in an absolutely exceptional World Cup. South African hearts and minds are full of excited anticipation ahead of football's greatest tournament and we can sense the immense enthusiasm across the entire nation whenever conversation invariably turns to the FIFA World Cup. We are convinced that the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ will be a tournament the likes of which the world has never seen before and we are looking forward to working together with you to achieve this goal.

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Joseph S. Blatter
FIFA President

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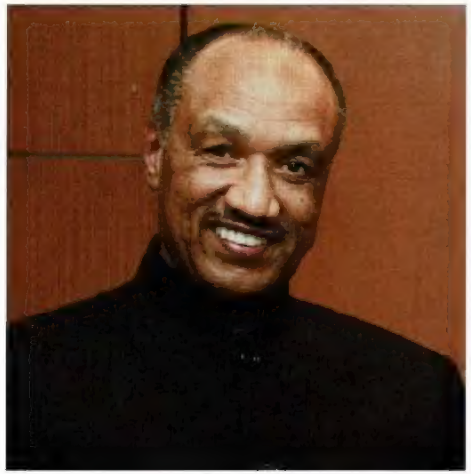

AFC

The Future is Asia

NEW NATIONS EMERGE AS A FORCE

"The excitement is palpable as the players get ready to give their best in a bid to reach the ultimate destination - the FIFA World Cup"

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the final round of the Asian qualifiers for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

The excitement is palpable as the players get ready to give their best in a bid to reach the ultimate destination - the FIFA World Cup.

If the results in the third round of qualifiers are anything to go by, the final round is all set to be a thrilling affair. We saw Asian champions Iraq's fairytale run ended even as a gritty DPR Korea staked their claim for an automatic qualifying slot with an impressive show.

Like DPR Korea, Qatar and the UAE have also emerged from the shadows of the continental heavyweights like Japan, Saudi Arabia or Korea Republic, who can no longer take their qualification for granted.

With only four direct qualification spots and 10 teams in the fray, only those who punch their tickets to South Africa will be celebrating while others will be left to rue the ignominy of defeat.

The stage is set for an interesting battle, but I would like to ask every player, official and referee, to show respect towards each other at all times because fair play is the only way a football competition can truly become extraordinary.

In their bid to earn a ticket to South Africa, they should also keep in mind the importance of sportsmanship which will help them stand out even in defeat.

I would like to remind all the teams that football is not just about winning or losing but to enjoy the 'beautiful game' as it could well be the dawn of a new era for Asian football.

I wish you all a very successful tournament and hope to see you all participating again in future competitions.

The Future is Asia.

Mohamed bin Hammam
AFC President

Otsuka

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FFA MESSAGE

SOUTH AFRICA QUEST CONTINUES

"The AFC format also gives fans a feast of football to enjoy and more opportunity than ever to support the Socceroos"

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

I would like to welcome everyone to this important match between Australia and Qatar this evening.

It is our first home game in the fourth stage of the 2010 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers, and we are very pleased to welcome the Qatar Football Association including its President, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani.

I am also delighted to acknowledge and welcome my good friend, the President of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), Mohamed bin Hammam.

There have been many firsts for football in Australia in recent years, but none quite as significant – and as important for the long-term benefit of the game – as being part of the AFC on the journey to South Africa 2010.

From a football perspective, being part of the AFC gives all of our national teams high quality opposition every time they take the field, as well as the potential for an extended qualification campaign.

High-quality opposition benefits the entire football family in Australia. It helps us to improve our own standards, quality of play, coaching and facilities; and, as the quality of our national teams improves, the impact will be felt down the line to the grassroots players which, turning full circle, gives us a larger pool of potential players for our national teams. The AFC format also gives Australian fans a feast of football to enjoy and more opportunity than ever before to show support for the Socceroos.

In this stage four group, which includes Bahrain, Japan and Uzbekistan, Australia will play eight games, including crucial games at home on four occasions, starting with tonight's match. (Other home games will be held on 1 April, 10 June and 17 June next year.)

But membership of the AFC has a much broader dimension too. It is an important way for Australia's engagement with Asia to become more than an economic bargain or a trade deal, but a meeting of hearts and minds. It gives us, as a nation, a capacity and opportunity to learn more about the region in which we live, and its people, through a common interest and passion in our favourite sport.

This is not a question of repudiating our history in favour of geography because, as we shape the future in the earlier part of the 21st century, the two will increasingly intersect.

Thank you to all our partners for their support for tonight's game – and a big thank you to all the fans for your passionate and colourful support of our national team.

My best wishes to Pim Verbeek and Australia, as well Bruno Metsu and Qatar, for what I am sure will be a highly competitive match for all.

Frank Lowy AC
Chairman
Football Federation Australia

SOCCEROOS CALL QUEENSLAND HOME

The Socceroos are set to put Queensland on the world football map with a landmark agreement between Football Federation Australia (FFA) and the Queensland Government.

FFA has signed a five-year agreement with the Queensland Government which means the state will play host to the Socceroos for five matches in five years, beginning with tonight's clash against Qatar.

"This is a smart move for us and we believe it's a smart move for Queensland too," said FFA CEO Ben Buckley.

"From our perspective, it means the Socceroos can have confidence in their home games, enjoying a great level of support from passionate fans of football in Queensland.

"We played here earlier this year against Iraq and chose to come here again because the team feels well and truly at home," Buckley said.

"We also appreciate the work and commitment of Stadiums Queensland in providing world class facilities both on and off the field."

Buckley said that Queensland boasts some of the best dedicated football stadiums in Australia.

"This agreement also puts Brisbane and Queensland at the forefront of governments, the corporate sector and fans around the world.

"But Socceroos matches are also broadcast elsewhere in the world including Europe, the UK and North America in significant numbers."

Buckley said that this year, in China alone, almost 5 million locals tuned-in to watch a FIFA World Cup qualifying match that was staged in Australia.

Announcing the agreement with Queensland Sports Minister, Judy Spence, Buckley added that the five matches include three FIFA World Cup qualifiers, including tonight's match against Qatar and two qualifiers for the 2014 FIFA World Cup, one AFC Asian Cup qualifier for the 2011 AFC Asian Cup, and one international friendly match.

YOUNG ROOS HEADING FOR SAUDI ARABIA

Young Socceroos Head Coach Jan Versleijen is finalising his squad for the AFC Championships to be held in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, at the end of this month.

Four Queensland Roar players are in the mix for a spot in the squad, including electrifying wingers Tahj Minniecon and Tommy Oar, midfielder Mitch Nichols and highly-rated defender Luke DeVere - a regular in the Roar side.

The AFC U19 Youth Championships will be held in Saudi Arabia between 31 October-14 November.

The top four nations from the championships will qualify for the FIFA U20 World Cup which will be held in Egypt from 10-31 July, 2009.

The Dutch-born coach took his squad to Thailand recently to fine-tune preparations.

"I believe we have a good team, with a mix of players with special qualities as well as good team players," said Versleijen.

YOUTH LEAGUE KICKS OFF

In what FFA CEO, Ben Buckley, described as a "very exciting" development for football, the new National Youth League has begun.

The league comprises teams from each of the seven current Australian A-League teams.

"The National Youth League represents our future. There is also a clear link with the A-League, as well as the various national teams at Under 17, Under 20, Under 23 levels, and the Socceroos," said Buckley.

The league provides players aged between 17-21 years of age a clear pathway from youth leagues to senior level and then on to professional level.

When combined with existing state-based competitions, players in the National Youth League will play around 35-40 games each year.

"For more than a decade football has been the sport of first choice for boys from 5-14 years and, now with the establishment of the National Youth League, there is substantial and regular high level competition in place for talented male athletes," said Buckley.

Buckley added that the National Youth League is of "paramount importance" to the future of football in Australia as we seek to capitalise on the growth of the sport.

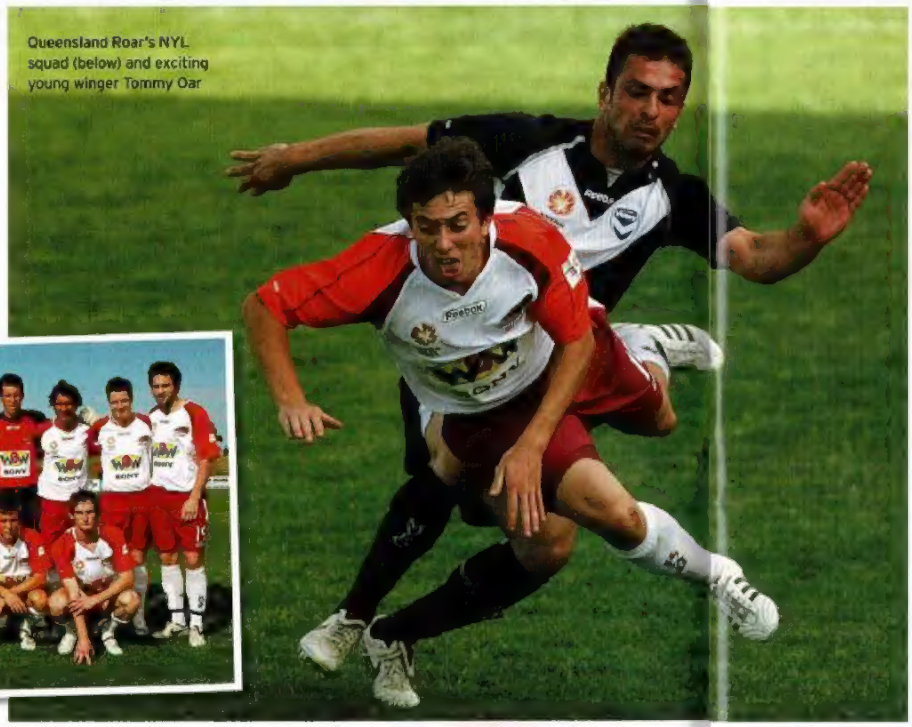
"Football also offers unparalleled opportunities to wear the green and gold representing Australia on the global stage, as well as playing internationally in the A-League through competitions such as the Asian Football Confederation's Champions League," he said.

"The players starting in the National Youth League competition this season are our A-League and Socceroos players for the next 10-15 years.

"The league means talented young players will have an opportunity to play regular, quality competitive games regardless of whether they are part of the AIS program, the State sports institutes or the State football leagues."

DID YOU KNOW?

The FFA website (www.footballaustralia.com.au) is the place to go for all your Socceroo supporters gear, Socceroo action figures, signed jerseys and trading cards. You can also show your loyalty to the Socceroos and the A-League on your computer, with cool wallpapers and screensavers available for download. And don't forget, for all your AFC football news head to www.the-afc.com



Queensland Roar's NYL squad (below) and exciting young winger Tommy Oar

INDIGENOUS COACHING CLINICS

Football West and FFA coaching staff recently held skills clinics as an introduction to the game at two remote indigenous communities in the Kimberley, WA.

Over 200 kindergarten, primary and secondary students from Looma Community School and Nookenbah Community School participated in skill sessions over a two-day period.

The sessions were met with enthusiasm by both students and teachers and will be followed up in 2009 with a return visit by Football West and FFA staff.

Clinics will also be held in other indigenous communities at this time with the culmination of a "Festival of Football" carnival day involving all schools.

The newly formed Broome Soccer Association will help initiate small-sided games for children in the area and is helping to provide coaching to the local schools in Broome, including the Kimberley Indigenous residential college.

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

JOEYS' UZBEKISTAN CHALLENGE

In the last two weeks our national U17 side (the Joeys) have been competing in the AFC U16 Championships in Uzbekistan. Joeys Head Coach Martyn Crook selected a 23-player squad to compete at the championships, held from 4-18 October.

The venue for the Joeys' first two matches was the Pakhtakor Stadium in Tashkent - the same ground in which the Socceroos recently defeated Uzbekistan 0-1 in their 2010 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifier match.

"We have been working hard for the past 18 months to prepare for this tournament and our performances at the ASEAN Cup and recent European tour have been promising," said Crook.

Earlier this year, the Joeys won the ASEAN Football Federation U16 Youth Championships in a penalty shoot-out against Bahrain.

The Joeys squad is:
Eli Babalj (WA), Chris Bush (ACTAS), Julius Davies (WA), Stephen Domenici (ACTAS), Cameron Edwards (WA), Petar Franjic (VIS), Nathan Farrell (SASI), Danai Gapare (ACTAS), Brendan Hamill (NSWIS), Kamal Ibrahim (VIS), Ben Kantarovski (Newcastle Jets), Robert Kolac (NSWIS), Aaron Lennox (NSWIS), Jared Lum (NSWIS), Chahine Noujaim (SASI), Mark Perrone (SASI), Dimitrios Petratos (NSWIS), Trent Sainsbury (WA), Nikola Stanojevic (NSWIS), Nicholas Tubbs (QAS), Marc Warren (NSWIS), Bailey Wright (VIS) and Teddy Yabio (VIS).

MATILDAS IN DEMAND

Sarah Walsh, Lisa De Vanna and Heather Garriock (above) - three Matildas stars - are in demand not only in Australia but also internationally.

In Australia, the W-League will kick-off at the end of October and comprises teams from each of the seven Australia-based A-League clubs as well as Canberra.

The W-League offers girls and women the opportunity to play at a professional level and further develop their skills.

But strikers Sarah and Lisa, and midfielder Heather, are already impressing professional football associations overseas.

Women's Professional Soccer (WPS), North America's women's professional football league announced the results of its WPS Initial International Draft last month - with the three Aussie women making the list.

The draft listed Sarah Walsh for Sky Blue FC (NJ/NY), Lisa De Vanna for Washington Freedom and Heather Garriock for the Chicago Red Stars.

"Australia's local talent is certainly being recognised and is in demand overseas, which is great news for the sport and its future," said FFA CEO Ben Buckley.

THE STORY SO FAR

Ten nations left as the race heats up across Asia

GROUP A

RESULTS SO FAR

MATCH DAY ONE
Sep 6

Qatar	3
Uzbekistan	0
Bahrain	2
Japan	3

*Australia bye

MATCH DAY TWO
Sep 10

Uzbekistan	0
Australia	1
Qatar	1
Bahrain	1

*Japan bye

AUSTRALIA

It was mission accomplished for the Socceroos in their first – and potentially trickiest – assignment of the group away to Uzbekistan in Tashkent.

After a bye for match day one on September 6 – when Australia defeated the Netherlands 2-1 in a friendly in Eindhoven – the Socceroos knew points on the road would be like gold dust.

And the Australians flew out with all three thanks to an outstanding team effort and a Scott Chipperfield winner. The Basel defender popped up to head home Luke Wilkshire's cross midway through the first half.

One match; one win – it's been a perfect start for Pim's plan.

JAPAN

Like Australia, Japan is one from one after a tricky away tie on the opening match day. For the Blue Samurai, it was a clash in Manama against Bahrain. Cruising at 3-0 with less than 10 minutes left to play, the home side was also reduced to 10 men after Mohamed Hussain's red card midway through the second stanza.

But Bahrain stunned Japan, pulling back two late goals. A jittery Japan hung on to leave the Persian Gulf with three vital points.

QATAR

Tonight's opponent is on top of the group after playing twice in September and remaining undefeated. A 3-0 win in Doha stunned Uzbekistan – who were considered a group dark horse – while a 1-1 draw against Bahrain also at home maintained the side's unbeaten run. New coach Bruno Metsu will hope it continues.

BAHRAIN

A loss to Japan and a draw away to Qatar keeps Bahrain's battlers in with a shout of qualifying, or, perhaps, a third placed finish. The away draw in Doha would've made up for the disappointment of losing to Japan at home, where they almost rescued a point.

UZBEKISTAN

Two games, two losses – it's baffling how a side that looked so dangerous at last year's AFC Asian Cup could show such disappointing form. The only positive is that it's still early days and with a new coach at the helm – former Bunyodkor supremo Mirdjalol Kasimov – hope springs eternal in Tashkent.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
QATAR	2	1	1	0	4	1	3	4
AUSTRALIA	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
JAPAN	1	1	0	0	3	2	1	3
BAHRAIN	2	0	1	1	3	4	-1	1
UZBEKISTAN	2	0	0	2	0	4	-4	0

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
DPR KOREA	2	1	1	0	3	2	1	4
SAUDI ARABIA	2	1	1	0	3	2	1	4
IR IRAN	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
KOREA REPUBLIC	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
UAE	2	0	0	2	2	4	-2	0

RESULTS SO FAR

MATCH DAY ONE
Sep 6

Saudi Arabia	1
IR Iran	1
UAE	1
DPR Korea	2

* Korea Republic bye

MATCH DAY TWO
Sep 10

DPR Korea	1
Korea Republic	1
UAE	1
Saudi Arabia	2

*IR Iran bye

DPR KOREA

Like Qatar in group A, DPR Korea have surprised some pundits early on. An encouraging win on the road in Abu Dhabi was backed up with a point in Shanghai against Korea Republic. For a nation that last qualified for the World Cup in 1966, this campaign is proving the 2008 side could be history makers again.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Two games; two losses and both at the King Fahad International Stadium in Abu Dhabi. Bruno Metsu departed shortly after to coach Qatar while the new man in charge of UAE's fortunes is Frenchman Dominique Batheney.

IR IRAN

A late goal to Spanish-based striker Javad Nekounam helped Iran rescue a point in Ryadh against the highly fancied Saudis. Saad Al-Harthi had earlier given the home side the lead. A point was a decent result for Ali Daei's side.

SAUDI ARABIA

Unbeaten in two, Saudi Arabia – regular World Cup qualifiers – have once again started strongly. A win on the road and a home draw against the fancied Iranians would have satisfied coach Musaybih Fahad Mohammed.

KOREA REPUBLIC

A solid start with one game, one draw (against DPR Korea in Shanghai) for Huh Jung-moo's men. They can build on this solid start when the rejuvenated UAE visits the Seoul World Cup Stadium on October 15.

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CAPTAIN SOCCEROO

Australia's inspirational defender talks to Aidan Ormond on the eve of tonight's crucial clash with Qatar

The modern-day Socceroos are blessed with inspirational leaders who have continued a tradition that goes back as far as Peter Wilson, Charlie Yankos, Paul Wade and Alex Tobin in the '70s and '80s and '90s.

As we all know, Queenslander Craig Moore has led the national team with distinction throughout his career, while Harry Kewell wore the armband last June in the absence of regular skipper Lucas Neill.

But with Neill back in the groove at club and Socceroo level, the national team won't be short of leadership when it matters.

And they're leadership skills developed over years of doing it tough with Millwall in England. After seven seasons at the London club, the Premiership called with Blackburn in 2002 then later West Ham, which he joined in 2007.

Oh, and did we mention he led his nation at a certain 2006 FIFA World Cup? It's been a hectic six years for the West Ham United captain.

Following a 2008 off-season which saw him take a long overdue break to recharge his batteries - and to become a dad to twins - it's a re-energised Lucas Neill who's set to lead the Australians into these remaining qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup spectacle in South Africa.

And after a precious three points in Uzbekistan in September, where the 30-year-old led the team with distinction, the journey continues tonight against a tricky Qatar here at Brisbane Stadium...

Qatar have played the Socceroos twice this year for two losses. What makes tonight any different?

The stakes are higher now. Tonight's game has more importance attached to it given it's the final round of FIFA World Cup qualifiers. They'll be hurting from their two losses to us earlier this year in Melbourne and in Doha. We'll have to be extra careful, but it's important also that we have a big partisan crowd who make the atmosphere a little intimidating for them. They'll be buoyant after two good results against Uzbekistan and Bahrain.

In Uzbekistan, Scott Chipperfield made a sensational return to the national team with a goal and a brilliant display as a full-back...

Not bad for a bus driver, eh?! I'm only joking, Scott has so many qualities and it's great now that we have real depth down the left side of defence with Scott,

VITAL STATISTICS

Born: 09 Mar 1978, Sydney
Height: 183cm
Weight: 78kg
Current Club: West Ham United (England)
Previous Clubs: 1995-2002 Millwall (England)
2002-2007 Blackburn Rovers (England)
Junior Clubs: Wakehurst Tigers (NSW)
Manly Warringah Reps (NSW)
Institutes & Academies:
Australian Institute of Sport (1994-95)

Major Honours Achieved:
1997 World Youth Championship (Malaysia)
2000 Olympic Games (Sydney)
2005 FIFA Confederations Cup (Germany)
2006 FIFA World Cup Finals (Germany)
2007 Asian Cup Finals

Socceroo Appearances: 44
Debut Match: v Saudi Arabia (0-0),
Friendly, Riyadh (KSA), October 1996

David Carney and Queenslander Shane Stefanutto. Scott's fitness is better now and his return is only going to intensify the competition for places.

Three points in Tashkent must have been a relief?
It was a feeling of satisfaction to leave Tashkent with the job done. We did what we had to do. We performed and worked to a game-plan. There was immense pressure on us at times but it's a credit to our players that we limited this pressure and were well prepared by our coaching staff. The feeling in the changing room after the match was really buoyant.

As a player you looked refreshed and reinvigorated against Uzbekistan. Is that how you felt?
I feel great. I had time off in the off-season - for the first time in five years - and it's been brilliant. It has enabled me to build a strong base of fitness, and with that you will always reap the benefits. I felt I had an indifferent season at West Ham last year, but I'm looking forward to a good season this time around.

Speaking of looking refreshed, your good mate Harry Kewell seems like a new man. Is that how you view his Turkey move?
I'm so delighted. Harry's had a frustrating time but we all know how skilful he is. He now has a permanent smile on his face, not a fake smile. It's such a bonus for us in the national team. When he's on-song, he's the best and he's been banging in the goals in the Turkish league. It's a different style of football over there. It's been a mental challenge for Harry and he's playing week-in, week-out.

Chris Coyne fitted in beautifully at the centre of the Socceroo defence against Uzbekistan in Tashkent - how has it been for you to have him there right next to you?
Chris is an old friend, we've known each other well for some time. I've kept track of his career while in England and he's from the old school, a school that doesn't mind the rough and tough. And he's got the experience.

Challenging for Chris' position is Craig Moore, who's made himself available again. Just how important is that piece of news?
Craig is another personal friend of mine. He's well liked and brings real experience

"Pim has spent many years coaching in Asia and gives us the edge in this difficult environment"

to the Socceroos. Just in the changing room his influence can be felt. He knows all the tricks of the trade. On the park, he's a real "Steady Eddy". His return in terms of making himself available for selection gives us another weapon and I'm really pleased this has happened.

You've travelled to Uzbekistan and have Bahrain, Qatar and Japan to come in your group. More difficult travel situations for the players...
Yes, but full credit to the Socceroo staff, who've helped the players get on top of the all the travel to these games throughout the AFC region. Things like our sleeping patterns and recovery are important. Credit to the boys for being able to show a high level of professionalism in such situations.

The Socceroos are off to the Persian Gulf and Bahrain in November. Another tough assignment?
We shouldn't expect any favours from them in their own backyard. Luckily though, in Pim Verbeek we have a coach who is very experienced in Asian football. He knows what to expect from places like Bahrain. With World Cup qualifiers we have to be prepared for everything. Fortunately, Pim has spent many years coaching in Asia and he gives us the edge in this difficult environment. He's alive to all the tricks of the trade and has a high level of professionalism – just like the players.

LUCAS NEILL SCHOLARSHIP

The Socceroo skipper is putting back into the game with his own foundation, which g ves talented teens the chance of a shot at professional football in the UK

Recently, 16-year-old Joseph Gibbs was chosen as the lucky recipient of the 2008 Lucas Neill scholarship. He is the third recipient in as many years following in the footsteps of Chris Payne (right, now with Sydney FC) and Simon Beer

Queens ander Steve Corica is involved in picking the winner, as is the Socceroo captain's father Ed. The program is based at Lucas' former Sydney club Manly United, where coach Phil Moss also contributes in the process of finding the lucky lad

"Congratulations to Joe on winning this scholarship, and I hope that he will make the most of the opportunity it will provide for him

He is a worthy winner and follows in the footsteps of two good footballers before him in Chr s and Simon," says Neill

"The scholarship is designed to give young talented footballers in the Manly Warringah area a unique opportunity to enter elite football"

Gibbs, an attacking midfielder originally from the Central Coast of NSW, has been trialling with Blackburn Rovers, West Ham and Ipswich Town over the last few weeks. "It'll give him a taste of what it's like over there," adds Neill

Gibbs was naturally delighted to be picked. "Playing football means everything to me, so to be selected from a group of other talented players is a dream come true

"I am very grateful to Lucas Neill, my coach Jim Foley and Phil Moss for this opportunity."

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Still, the travel isn't easy, is it?
We are now accustomed to flying long distances to exotic locations like Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Kunming (southern China) and Doha in Qatar in our quest for World Cup qualification. Again pay credit to the backroom staff that fatigue has not become a major factor for the players during games. They advise us on our sleeping patterns when we're travelling and keep disruptions to a minimum.

FFA has signed a deal for five Socceroo games over five years in Queensland. What do you say to the Sunshine State football fans?
The Socceroos don't come to town often, so starting with tonight's match against Qatar, it's important. We need a full house at Brisbane Stadium to justify us coming back for more games. So remember all the good times the Socceroos have had and cheer as loudly as you can to help us on the way to the World Cup. It's vital the fans get behind us tonight.

And finally, at club level, Italian great Gianfranco Zola taking over at West Ham has been lauded. What do you think he'll bring to the Hammers?
Gianfranco comes from an extremely talented football background. His time with the Italian national team gives him that special type of experience. He's well educated in a football sense and has very high standards. Gianfranco brings to West Ham a different mentality and a high level of discipline. I'm really looking forward to his era unfolding and hopefully it means success at West Ham.

"LUCAS A STEP AHEAD" MICHAEL THWAITE

Queenslander Michael Thwaite debuted for the Socceroos three years ago. It was against Jamaica in England and the Socceroos used that friendly international as a warm-up for their successful FIFA World Cup qualifiers with Uruguay.

The 5-0 win over the Reggae Boyz saw Thwaite play alongside Neil at the heart of the Australian backline. It was an eye-opening experience for the rookie defender.

"Playing alongside Lucas helped me out so much," says Thwaite. "He is one of the most talented defenders I've ever played with for Australia."

That day, then-Socceroo coach Guus Hiddink opted for Tony Vidmar and Scott Chipperfield to play the wide roles in defence with Neil partnering a rookie Thwaite in the centre.

A clean sheet is all you can ask for as a defender and that's what Australia got in this morale-boosting victory at Fulham's Craven Cottage.

Thwaite says he learnt a few tricks playing alongside the national team skipper. The best defenders' timing is different to the up-and-coming players. Lucas' timing, himself and with the other players around him makes him a step ahead.

"And I think that in international football, that's a telling point."

Neil's success in the English Premier League is another reason why Thwaite looks up to the man tagged "Lucas Skywalker".

"To do that week-in, week-out [in the EPL] with such composure and consistency ... well, it was a big honour to play alongside him."

MICHAEL THWAITE

LOOK NORTH

Two of Queensland's most-travelled sons tell Aidan Ormond about their hopes for football in the north of the state

Queenslander Michael Thwaite, has always hit the road. In 2002, the tall defender, then 19, had already established himself in the north of the state, so he headed for the bright lights of Sydney. Then came his European adventure. Romania, Poland and Norway were his destinations over the next few years before a chance to return home popped up. Thwaite is currently back in Australia, on loan from Norwegian club SK Brann to A-League club Melbourne Victory, until at least next February.

But the 25-year-old remembers his days learning his football in Queensland and looks forward to the state realising its potential as a football powerbase.

You started your football career up in Cairns, tell us a little more about that...
I started off with Saints Soccer Club in Cairns and played with them till I was about 16, after which I played senior football. The Cairns area is quite good for producing players, like Steve Corica, Frank Farina and others. They are like the icons for the next generation. There are a lot of kids playing up there. And right now, there is a little generation gap as the teams are having to play a lot of younger players in the senior competitions.

Growing up, did you play alongside any players we may have heard of?
I played with Wayne Srhoj, who's currently with Perth Glory. We grew up pretty close together - he grew up in Mareeba near Cairns. I ended up playing with Wayne during my time in Romania too. Also there was a player called Zenon Caravella who came out of that same region. He's been in Holland lately [playing for FC Omniworld, although rumoured to be joining Gold Coast United].

What can the north Queenslanders add that maybe other players simply don't have?
I think that players from the north of the state can add something extra to the game. A lot of the Brisbane players, and even further south, are probably technically better produced than the far north players but I think the ruggedness of how we're brought up helps with our competitiveness. I think we [north Queenslanders] have a lot more of that.

How did that go down when you played rep footy as a junior?
When we used to play southern teams, for far north Queensland we used to be the battlers. While the players from the south were prim and proper, we were just out there to battle for 90 minutes. But now I think they're trying to change that, which will benefit the North Queensland team in the A-League.

What effect will the new franchise in the north of the state have?
We never really had that opportunity to step into the A-League type competition. We'd have to go down south or to Sydney, which I did to try and establish myself, because not much scouting happens up in Cairns, let alone Townsville or Mackay. But now that will happen through the state leagues and the lower leagues with this new franchise in Townsville. It has to happen. They have to have local players. And probably not for my generation but for the next one, it'll benefit them.

How will North Queensland go in the A-League?
To be fair it'll be hard at the start. But they've recruited a good coach in Ian Ferguson. He has a good head on his shoulders and he was a very experienced player. I think as long as they recruit well

"HEAT FACTOR IS A WEAPON"

Steve Corica on how North Queensland can use its natural advantage in the A-League

He may not play for a Queensland A-League team, but Innisfail boy Steve Corica is keen to see his old pals in and around Cairns prosper in the league.

Corica says it's much easier now for talented kids from Cairns and surrounding regions to get a chance to show what they can do.

"There's a lot of young talent that doesn't get seen. I'm from Innisfail. I was quite lucky to get spotted but I'm sure there are a lot of young boys who have the potential to be spotted for the A-League.

"The North Queensland FC team will be looking all over from Cairns down to Townsville. It's three or four hours away and I'm sure there's a lot of young talent coming through and they may now be thinking 'there's a chance for me' in a few years to be playing in the A-League. For that reason alone, I think the game in Queensland is going to improve for sure."

Corica may never actually play against North Queensland. This season, it's said, will be his last after a stellar career that's seen him on the books of England's Leicester City, Wolverhampton Wanderers and Walsall as well as a stint with J-League side Hiroshima Sanfrecce.

He has begun coaching Sydney FC's youth team as an assistant and a full-time move into coaching is likely.

The former Socceroo, capped 32 times for his nation including five goals over a 13-year span, says the final decision on next season won't be made until later in the year.

But whatever happens, he knows the heat factor for North Queensland will be a bonus.

"For teams visiting, they might have to play a different type of game. Slower perhaps. I think that will be a big advantage for North Queensland as they are training and playing up there all year.

"It's very hot in summer and will be very tough for the opposition. The humidity really takes it out of you. I remember as a kid playing in those conditions. I think when you grow up there you get used to those conditions. When I go back to see my parents on holidays just walking around is quite tough!"

But you get the feeling he's hoping the NQ side does well. The Sydney FC star adds with pride. "When you're born up in Queensland, you're a Queenslander through and through."

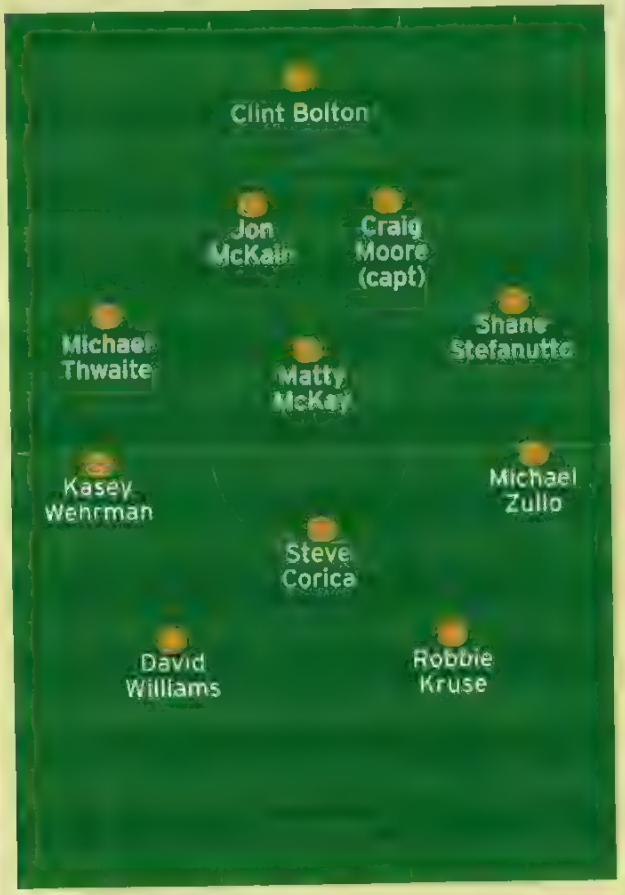
- which is something that a lot of the A-League teams are starting to learn now - they'll do well. But it's going to be a very big test for both Townsville and Gold Coast in season one for both clubs.

And for the fans, there'll be three areas in Queensland which can provide A-League football...
As a Queenslander you can see how much derbies benefit other football codes. I think football will be right up there and I know it's what the players and supporters need. In a place like Cairns and Townsville it's exactly what they need because they've probably got the biggest numbers of juniors across the whole of Australia. Now they'll have a team to support.

And dovetailing neatly is the new deal which will see five Socceroo games in Queensland over the next five years...
It just goes to show that the FFA is open-minded and wants to broaden the game across the country. At Brisbane Stadium with the Socceroos they already get great crowds, and hopefully that sort of enthusiasm will stretch further north into Townsville and also the Gold Coast. So it's going to be great for the younger fans but it's also great for the Socceroos.

ULTIMATE QUEENSLAND XI

The Socceroo magazine reckons an All-Star Queensland side would do very well... what do you think?



Coach Frank Farina
Subs Wayne Srhoj, Jimmy Downie, Andy Packer, Tim Smits, Mitchell Langerak

Qatar's star burns bright

With a star-studded local league, Qatar has the means and ambition to compete

By Aidan Ormond

Qatar's naturalised striker Sebastian Quintana may have had to consult a map before he first arrived in his adopted home, but he and his teammates are hoping to put Qatari football on the football map in tonight's vital FIFA World Cup qualifier with Australia.

Australia's opposition tonight should not be underestimated. Qatar came within a whisker of making it to the 1998 FIFA World Cup in France. They beat the likes of China and Iran to enter the last match against Saudi Arabia needing just a point to book the group's automatic qualifying place.

However, with qualification to their first-ever FIFA World Cup tantalisingly close - and a nation gripped by football fever and national pride - they lost out as the Saudis went through 1-0.

Qatar has won major tournaments in Asia. They've taken home an Asian Games gold in men's football, won a Gulf Cup and regularly qualify for the region's biggest event, the AFC Asian Cup.

But coach Bruno Metsu's ambitious Qatar team walk onto Brisbane Stadium's surface tonight with something even bigger in mind: that elusive FIFA World Cup place.

Journey to Brisbane

After easing past Sri Lanka in round two AFC World Cup qualifiers in 2007, Qatar's campaign stepped up a gear for round three earlier this year. Grouped with Australia plus the likes of Iraq and China, Qatar found itself in one of the toughest draws.

Iraq and the Socceroos were early favourites to go through and the Aussies duly defeated Qatar home and away. But Qatar have surprised many with their fighting qualities, edging out Iraq 1-0 in the final group game in Dubai on June 22.

Needing a win to advance, Seyd Bechir was the hero heading home with 13 minutes left to send the Annabi (Maroons) joint top of the group alongside Australia on 10 points, three ahead of the third-placed Iraqis. Coach at the time, Jorge Fossati, knew opportunities would be at a premium, but adopted an attacking approach at the Al Ahli Stadium. "We went into the game with only one chance and we successfully took the chance and qualified," he commented later.

Qatar went into that Iraq game with quiet confidence. In late 2006, Qatar defeated Iraq 1-0 in the Asian Games final. Bilal Mohammed headed past Iraq's Mohammed Kassid to clinch the gold-medal game for the host nation.

"Seyd Bechir was the hero, heading home to send the Annabi (Maroons) joint top of the group alongside Australia on 10 points"

VITAL STATISTICS

- Full name: Dawlat Qatar
- Qatar Football Association: www.qfa.com.qa
- FIFA ranking: 81
- Average FIFA ranking: 75
- Highest FIFA ranking: 51 (August, 1993)
- Home stadium: Khalifa International Stadium
- Population: 907,000
- Capital: Doha
- Other cities: Musay'id, Dukhan, Umm Bab, Khor, Wakra, Al Khawr
- Major language: Arabic
- Monetary unit: Riyal
- Main exports: Oil, gas

"Qatar is big on football vision and they come to Brisbane tonight full of promise and hope"

The tournament is a kind of regional Olympic Games and, as far as football is concerned, serves as a platform to develop players for the national team as it's an U23 event. It was the first ever gold medal in football for the Qataris.

This wasn't the only trophy then-coach Bosnian Dzemaludin Musovic had won with Qatar. Musovic, who had replaced Frenchman Philippe Troussier in 2004, won that year's Gulf Cup, which was held on home soil.

However, disappointment followed in the two major tournaments that Musovic's Qatar entered last year. In January, UAE hosted the Gulf Cup but Qatar finished winless from three matches in the group stage

Sadly for Qatar, the 2007 AFC Asian Cup, had a similarly sour taste. The team was based in Vietnam for its group B matches. Many felt that Qatar had an outside chance of finishing second behind powerhouse Japan.

However, two draws and a loss consigned Annabi to bottom place and an early flight home.

It was a surprising after such a promising start. Quintana scored a late equaliser to earn an encouraging 1-1 draw with the Blue Samurai at My Dinh National Stadium in Hanoi despite star Qatari midfielder Hussain Yasser earning a red card.

But that was followed by a 1-1 draw with host nation Vietnam and a 2-1 loss to UAE, who had Faisal Khalil pop up in the 90th minute to break Qatari hearts.

Qatar finished on two points behind UAE on three and surprise packet Vietnam on four. Japan topped the group going through to the knock-out stage along with the plucky Vietnamese.

On Q

The only joy for Qatar at the 2007 AFC Asian Cup was the fact Quintana proved himself a striker of international quality by scoring all three of the side's goals.

Musovic was delighted with Quintana's form. "During our training camp and during the friendly games Sebastian did not score and a lot of people started to ask questions of him, why he has not been scoring," he said.

"I had to explain to them that it is not just his fault. Sebastian is not just a goalscorer; he is a team player and works hard for the whole team."

This tournament proved to be the last for Musovic, before Jorge Fossati took over in August last year, however Frenchman Bruno Metsu landed the Qatar hotseat only last month.

Metsu left his post with UAE to join Qatar after Fossati departed following ill-health and surgery on a stomach problem. Metsu left his previous job after two games of the final round of qualification, with UAE bottom of the group with no points while Qatar hold a far loftier position after a strong start. Metsu had been coach of UAE since June 2006 and won the Gulf Nations Cup in January 2007. Metsu also got Senegal to the 2002 World Cup in South Korea and Japan, and led Al Gharrafa to the Qatar league title in 2005.

Football hotbed

Qatar's reputation as a football hotbed has been fuelled by the boom in the country's natural reserves of gas. It possesses the world's third-largest

QATAR
Men To Watch

SEBASTIAN QUINTANA (STRIKER)

If Qatar are to shock sides in this group, Quintana is likely to be the outlet up front. With three goals in three games during Qatar's disappointing 2007 AFC Asian Cup, he proved his weight in gold.

Months earlier another three in the country's Asian Games triumph in his debut tournament also caught the eye.

Quintana (*below*) – dubbed "The Cat" – scored 14 goals as Al-Gharaffa won the 2005 Qatar League title before moving to Qatar Sports Club at the end of the season, where he got his name on the team sheet 19 times.

In a recent interview he explained how he ended up in Qatar. "I was brought to Qatar in September, 2004, by [current Qatar coach] Bruno Metsu who was at Al-Gharrafa. When I received the offer I jumped at the opportunity. I had to look it up on the map because I didn't know where it was. To win the last gold medal at the Asian Games was something really special for us," he said. "It came in the first tournament I played representing Qatar.

"We have a good infrastructure, an ever-growing league and we can do well against the best teams in Asia like Saudi Arabia and Japan. My ultimate dream is to make the FIFA World Cup finals."

Tonight, he'll get his first chance at achieving that goal.

KHALFAN IBRAHIM (STRIKER)

This pint-sized 20-year-old forward (*above*) made a stunning debut for Qatar. Against Bangladesh in a 2007 AFC Asian Cup qualifier he banged in two brilliant goals to announce his arrival.

The hype had been building for some time after a star turn at the 2005 FIFA U17 World Cup against Holland where he scored. And he stunned Asia not long after when he took out the AFC's Player of the Year award in 2006.

A former Al-Arabi star, Khalfan, is currently with Al-Sadd where he has managed to score 16 goals in 47 appearances to help the side win the 2007 league trophy.

Ibrahim, whose full name is Khalfan Ibrahim Khalfan Al Khalfan, was injured for much of 2007 after tearing a cruciate ligament in his knee but starts 2008 fit and raring to go.

Ibrahim's father also once played for the national team.

ABDULLAH KONI (DEFENDER)

A tall, powerful defender who is originally from Senegal but who took up Qatari citizenship. The Al-Sadd man is a key plank in Fossati's defensive plans as the Qataris look to shut out the Socceroos. The 29-year-old plies his trade for Qatari powerhouse Al-Sadd and is a national team regular.

MESAAD AL-HAMAD (MIDFIELDER)

One of the young talents coming though the Qatari system, Al-Hamad is familiar with the Socceroos after figuring in the team which lost 3-0 in Melbourne earlier in the year. The Al-Sadd midfielder, 22, links well with the forward line and has pace and skill.

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No matter how little a child has, if they have their health, they have a shot at a future. Which is why UNICEF Australia and Football Federation Australia are teaming up to create crucial sports-based community programs for underprivileged children whose lives are at risk from poverty, disease and violence in places such as Papua New Guinea, Iraq and even parts of Australia. And now we're asking you to join the team.

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"I think the Megs series is totally cool. The trouble and triumphs of a boy at school football's the focus without being lame. Who doesn't love a novel about the [illegible] game?"

Gallagher

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"The next generation of Qatari sports stars are being groomed at high tech sporting academies"

natural gas reserves and its small population has one of the highest per capita incomes of any country.

This petro-dollar boom has enabled those with vision to dream big in Doha. Some of the biggest names in world football have landed in the nation's Q-League thanks to a four-foreign player rule and a reported $10 million grant to each of the 10 clubs.

Jay-Jay Okocha, Gabriel Batistuta, Marcel Desailly and Romario, and some of Asia's finest, including Iraqi superstar striker Younis Mahmoud and former Socceroo Tony Popovic, are just some of the names who have been brought in to help the league grow.

And those stellar imports include coaches too. Former Uruguayan supremo Jorge Fossati delivered great success at Q-League powerhouse Al-Sadd before he began the task of steering Qatar's FIFA World Cup campaign for South Africa 2010.

This foreign football influence has seeped into Qatar's football consciousness. At national team level, this has also been helped by the naturalisation of a number of foreign-born players who have gone on to represent Qatar, including Brazilians Fabio Cesar and Marconi Amaral.

But it's at youth level where the Annabi have excelled in recent years. Regularly starring at AFC level, the youth side reached the final of the 1981 FIFA World Youth Championship against West Germany, which Qatar hosted in Doha. In 1990, the side finished fourth at the FIFA U17 World Championship, beating Australia 1-0, before finally losing a semi-final to eventual champions Ghana in a penalty shoot-out.

In 2006, Qatari youngster Khalfan Ibrahim made a stunning entry into AFC football history by winning the AFC's Asian Player of the Year Award. Judge for yourself tonight if he plays. What's more, the next generation of Qatari sports stars are being groomed at their high tech sporting academies such as the ASPIRE Academy for Sports Excellence in Doha, which was launched in 2004 with special guest Maradona in attendance.

Needless to say, football is abuzz in this Middle Eastern country, located on the Arabian Peninsula bordering the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia.

Qatar is big on football vision and the team comes to Brisbane tonight full of promise for what they hope becomes a landmark qualifying campaign.

"LAPTOP" STADIUM

Did you know they are building an underground stadium in Qatar?

Built on 200,000 square metres, and featuring a sunken pitch, it is set to be ready in 2009, and well in time for the 2011 AFC Asian Cup.

Dr Athanasios Batsilas, the technical director of Qatar Football Association, explains the stadium, which some have said looks like an open laptop:

"You will not see any light towers around this new stadium. This is the unique part of this wonderful project. We shall have lights integrated inside the main stand of the stadium, which can house around 11,000 people. We will have latest audio and video technology inside the stadium. The public shall have easy access from seven roads leading into the underground car park."

AUSTRALIA

Fill in numbers as line-ups are announced

GOALKEEPERS

- Eugene Galekovic
- Michael Petkovic
- Mark Schwarzer

DEFENDERS

- Scott Chipperfield
- Robert Cornthwaite
- Chris Coyne
- Scott Jamieson
- Craig Moore
- Lucas Neill
- Jade North
- Matthew Spiranovic
- Shane Stefanutto

MIDFIELDERS

- Jacob Burns
- Tim Cahill
- David Carney
- Jason Culina
- Brett Emerton
- Richard Garcia
- Brett Holman
- Mile Jedinak
- Stuart Musialik
- Paul Reid
- Mile Sterjovski
- Luke Wilkshire

FORWARDS

- Bruce Djite
- Josh Kennedy
- Scott McDonald
- Archie Thompson

QATAR

GOALKEEPERS

- Mohamed Saqr Ahmed
- Abdulaziz Ali Abdulla
- Rajab Hamza Kassim

DEFENDERS

- Abdulla Obaid Koni (C)
- Bilal Mohammed Rajab
- Ibrahim Majed Abdullmajed
- Ibrahim Abdulla Al Ghanim
- Saad Sattam Alshammri
- Meshal Mubarak Budawood
- Mustafa Mohammed Abdulla
- Ali Nasser Saleh
- Abdulrahman Mesbeh Almeamari
- Selman Mesbeh Almeamari

MIDFIELDERS

- Marcone Amaral Junior
- Majdi Abdulla Siddiq
- Fabio Cesar Montesin
- Khalfan Ibrahim Al Khalfan
- Wesam Rizik Abdulmajid

FORWARDS

- Andres Sebastian Quintana
- Hussain Yaser Abdulrahman
- Magid Mohamaed Hassan
- Hasan Khalid Alhaydos
- Mohammed Gholam Al Boloushi
- Younes Ali Rahmati
- Mugib Hamid Taha Gamer

Meet the Socceroos

Here is the squad picked by Pim Verbeek for tonight's FIFA World Cup qualifier with Qatar

We've got the playing squad, the coaching team and back-up staff, now it's your turn to be part of the green and gold team.

The fans can be the 12th man and the Socceroos are calling on you to help them get through tonight's tough test against Qatar.

Queensland has just signed a major deal to host five Socceroos games over five years so what better way to repay that faith than to scream your lungs out for Lucas, Timmy and the rest of our Socceroo heroes.

So, what are you waiting for? Make some noise for our boys...

AUSTRALIA

Match officials

Referee Khalil Ibrahim Al Ghamdi (Saudi Arabia)
Assistant Referee 1 Mohammed Hamad Al Ghamdi (Saudi Arabia)
Assistant Referee 2 Hamdi Al-Sheikh Al Kadrie (Syria)
4th Official Khalid Ibrahim Al Zahrani (Saudi Arabia)
Referees Assessor Mariam Murugian (Singapore)
Commissioner Amir Hossein Kanmpour Ardestani (IR Iran)

FFA

Head of Delegation Phillip Wolanski, AM
Head Coach Pim Verbeek
Assistant Coaches Henk Duut, Graham Arnold
Goalkeeping Coach Tony Franken
Team Manager Gary Moretti
Medical Practitioner Dr Peter Brukner
Physiotherapist Phil Coles
Strength and Conditioning Coach Darren Burgess
Masseur Luke Attwell
Equipment Manager Dominic Rabsch
Media Operations Adam Mark
FFA TV Unit Lindsay McNeil
Security Brendan Paterson

COACHES

Pim Verbeek

AGE: 52
POSITION:
SOCCEROO HEAD COACH

Pim was appointed coach of the Socceroos in December 2007. Since then he's guided Australia to the final round of FIFA World Cup qualifiers. He came to Australia after many successful years with the Korea Republic, first as an assistant coach under Guus Hiddink and Dick Advocaat, then as head coach. He took Korea Republic to third spot at the 2007 AFC Asian Cup.

Henk Duut

AGE: 44
POSITION:
SOCCEROO ASSISTANT COACH

After over 200 games as a defender in the Dutch Eredivisie with Feyenoord and Fortuna Sittard, Henk moved into coaching 16 years ago. Starting as a youth club coach, he moved into the international arena in 2004 as an assistant to Pim Verbeek with Dutch Antilles. He moved back to Holland as an assistant with Feyenoord before rejoining Pim in late 2007.

Graham Arnold

AGE: 45
POSITION:
SOCCEROO ASSISTANT COACH

Graham first wore the green and gold in 1985 and became only the second Australian to play in four FIFA World Cup campaigns. He was first appointed assistant coach for the Socceroos in 2000 and has since worked under Guus Hiddink and Pim Verbeek as an assistant coach as well as taking over the reins as head coach at various times.

COACHES

Hey kids! You can be a
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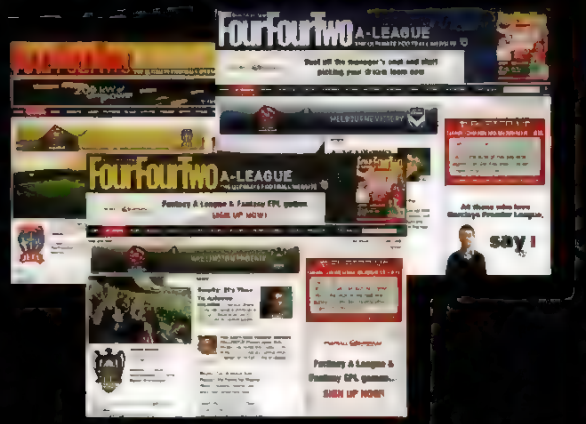


GOALKEEPERS

Eugene Galekovic

AGE: 27
POSITION: GOALKEEPER
CLUB: ADELAIDE UNITED
APPEARANCES: 0

At A-League side Adelaide United this has been a starring season for 27 year old Eugene. The former Melbourne Victory custodian's form has been one of the factors behind the Reds successful Asian Champions League campaign which has seen the side reach the semi finals (at time of writing). Galekovic is a former Olympic team keeper at Athens 2004.

Michael Petkovic

AGE: 32
POSITION: GOALKEEPER
CLUB: SIVASSPOR
APPEARANCES: 6

Along with brother Jason (Perth Glory), also a keeper, Michael has represented the Socceroos, albeit intermittently, since 2001. Was chosen for the 2005 Confederations Cup and started against Tunisia in the third game. He has been plying his trade in Turkey in the last few years, first with Trabzonspor before moving to Sivasspor in 2005-06.

Mark Schwarzer

AGE: 36
POSITION: GOALKEEPER
CLUB: FULHAM
APPEARANCES: 61

Mark's place in Australian footballing history is set thanks to his FIFA World Cup qualifying heroics against Uruguay. He began his Socceroos career in similar fashion by starring in a shoot-out during a 1993 FIFA World Cup qualifier in his first senior appearance. A star in the English Premiership with Middlesbrough and now Fulham, "Schwarzy" is a fan fave.

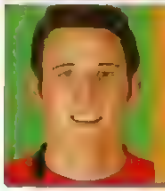
GOALKEEPERS

DEFENDERS

Scott Chipperfield

AGE: 32
POSITION: DEFENDER
CLUB: FC BASEL
APPEARANCES: 57

After winning his second Australian Player of the Year award in 2001 he moved to Switzerland, where he continued his club success at Basel. A natural left-sided player with pace and an ability to take on and regularly beat defenders, he has been a regular in the national team since debuting in 1998. Scored a brilliant goal in Tashkent in Australia's last game.



Robert Cornthwaite

AGE: 22
POSITION: DEFENDER
CLUB: ADELAIDE UNITED
APPEARANCES: 0

Another one of Adelaide United's stars this season. Robbie's goal in the Asian Champions League quarter-final second leg was one of the great moments this season (after his own-goal in the first leg) gifted Kashima an equaliser. At almost 200cm, Robbie's one of our tallest defenders and he's used this height to also become a goalscoring defender.

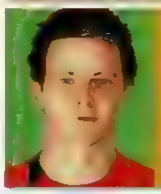
DEFENDERS

DEFENDERS

Chris Coyne

POSITION: DEFENDER
CLUB: COLCHESTER UNITED
APPEARANCES: 4

Older brother of Perth Glory's Jamie Coyne, Chris has been playing his club football in England for over a decade. Originally at West Ham, he found form and stability at Luton Town and now Colchester. He has easily made the step up to the Socceroos this year where he's looked very comfortable alongside Lucas Neill at the heart of the defence.



Scott Jamieson

AGE: 20
POSITION: DEFENDER
CLUB: ADELAIDE UNITED
APPEARANCES: 0

Scott's ascension as one of the most promising full backs locally has been a real feel-good story from this season. Returning to Australia after being on the fringes at Bolton over the last three seasons, Scott's performances both domestically and in the Reds' stunning Asian Champions League campaign have really caught the eye. He turned 20 two days ago.

Craig Moore

AGE: 32
POSITION: DEFENDER
CLUB: QUEENSLAND ROAR
APPEARANCES: 39

Craig is one of the great leaders in Australian football with over a of decade experience in Europe. He showed his class at the 2006 FIFA World Cup with a dominant performance in all four games as well as a penalty goal against Croatia. Under his leadership, Queensland Roar made the A-League finals for the first time last season and he's continued his form this year.

Lucas Neill

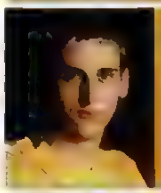
AGE: 30
POSITION: DEFENDER
CLUB: WEST HAM UNITED
APPEARANCES: 44

Lucas made his Socceroos debut over 10 years ago but it's only over the last four or five years that he has really established himself as our defensive linchpin and leader. At the 2006 FIFA World Cup, he became one of our most recognisable players after a series of commanding performances. The Hammers skipper will be vital on the road to South Africa 2010.

Jade North

AGE: 26
POSITION: DEFENDER
CLUB: NEWCASTLE JETS
APPEARANCES: 22

A mobile and versatile defender, North fits the bill for the modern Socceroo perfectly. The Newcastle Jets defender has learnt his trade in the system having played for our national U17, U20 and U23 sides as well as the senior side over the last eight years. And Taree-born North's form continues to impress in the A-League.



Matthew Spiranovic

AGE: 20
POSITION: DEFENDER
CLUB: FC NURNBERG
APPEARANCES: 2

Currently plying his trade at German second division side Numberg, Spiranovic has already represented Australia at youth level and has committed his future to the green and gold, debuting in the friendly against Ghana last May. His assured performances at the Olympics in China proof that "Spira" can be part of the national team for years to come.

Shane Stefanutto

AGE: 28
POSITION: DEFENDER
CLUB: FC LYN OSLO
APPEARANCES: 1

The Cairns-born attacking defender provides another weapon for Pim Verbeek down the Socceroo left. After a successful spell with Brisbane Strikers, Shane left Australia in 2004 and has been plying his trade ever since in the Norwegian league - firstly with Lillestrom and now at Lyn Oslo. The livewire made his international debut last year in a friendly against China.

MIDFIELDERS

Jacob Burns

AGE: 30
POSITION: MIDFIELDER
CLUB: UNIREA VOLUNTARI URZICENI
APPEARANCES: 0

After a successful stint with Parramatta Power, Jacob spent six seasons in Yorkshire, England with Leeds and Barnsley before moving onto Poland and then Romania. He was excellent in Australia's midfield in the recent 1-0 win over Uzbekistan in Tashkent. Hard-working Jacob debuted in 2000 when the Aussies shocked Scotland 2-0 at Hampden Park in a friendly.

Tim Cahill

AGE: 28
POSITION: MIDFIELDER
CLUB: EVERTON
APPEARANCES: 28

Tim will be forever etched in Australian football history as the first Aussie player to score at a FIFA World Cup when he slammed home the equaliser against Japan at Germany 2006. In England, he is arguably the best attacking midfielder in the EPL and makes a welcome return to the national team after missing some key games this year through injury.

David Carney

AGE 24
POSITION: MIDFIELDER
CLUB: SHEFFIELD UNITED
APPEARANCES: 15

David caught the eye with some outstanding performances at the 2007 AFC Asian Cup finals, playing in the role of left wing back. It earned him a contract with Sheffield United after he'd made his name at Sydney FC in the A-League. He is now battling for a regular spot with Scott Chipperfield down the left of the Socceroo defence.

Jason Culina

AGE: 28
POSITION: MIDFIELDER
CLUB: PSV EINDHOVEN
APPEARANCES: 34

Jason is a key part of the Socceroo starting XI. He has mobility, and is a smart linkman with the ability to play the ball out of midfield intelligently. Jason has spent the last eight years playing his club football in Holland and has UCL experience too. He is now considered one of the national team's most important players as we head towards South Africa 2010.

Brett Emerton

AGE: 29
POSITION: MIDFIELDER
CLUB: BLACKBURN ROVERS
APPEARANCES: 68

Brett has been a regular Socceroo since the late '90s when he debuted aged just 18. After captaining Australia at the 2000 Sydney Olympics he moved to Feyenoord then later completed a dream move to the English Premier League and Blackburn Rovers. Brett is one of the best athletes ever to pull on the green and gold shirt and is a vital part of Pim Verbeek's plans.

Richard Garcia

AGE: 27
POSITION: MIDFIELDER
CLUB: HULL CITY
APPEARANCES: 2

Perth-born Richard has flown under the radar for many years but the exciting, pacy midfielder is now playing in the English Premiership and is a member of the Socceroo squad. The former West Ham youth player debuted last August against South Africa in a friendly in London and continues to impress with newly-promoted Hull City in the Premiership.

MIDFIELDERS

Brett Holman

AGE: 24
POSITION: MIDFIELDER
CLUB: AZ ALKMAAR
APPEARANCES: 19

The clever attacking midfielder burst onto the Aussie scene as a 17-year-old and was soon snapped up by Dutch giant Feyenoord. He was then loaned out to Excelsior, although the club was later relegated from the Dutch top flight. Brett moved to NEC Nijmegen at the end of the 2006 season and also debuted for the Socceroos that year. Now with AZ Alkmaar

Mile Jedinak

AGE: 24
POSITION: MIDFIELDER
CLUB: CENTRAL COAST MARINERS
APPEARANCES: 3

Mile is a product of the New South Wales premier league. And after some outstanding performances with the Central Coast in the A-League, he has forced his powerful frame into Socceroos reckoning. An enforcer in midfield, Jedinak will dominate his opponent no matter what it takes and also possesses a powerful strike.

Stuart Musialik

AGE: 23
POSITION: MIDFIELDER
CLUB: SYDNEY FC
APPEARANCES: 0

A classy holding midfielder with a good range of passing, Stuart was a key component in the national U23s' qualification campaign for the Beijing Olympics. At club level, Newcastle-born Stuart is one of Sydney's new signings. So highly thought of was Stuart that he was invited to join the Socceroos during the 2006 FIFA World Cup as a train-on player.

Paul Reid

AGE: 29
POSITION: MIDFIELDER
CLUB: ADELAIDE UNITED
APPEARANCES: 0

One of three debutants called up from the successful Adelaide United line-up. Reid is one of the fittest players in the A-League. After six years in England, Reid, a former championship winner with Wollongong in 2000, was tempted back to the A-League and the move has reaped dividends with the 29-year-old's call up to the national squad.

MIDFIELDERS

Mile Sterjovski

AGE: 29
POSITION: MIDFIELDER
CLUB: DERBY COUNTY
APPEARANCES: 37

Mile is another talented product of the Wollongong football scene. He first got noticed in the late '90s in Australia. The speedy midfielder moved to Europe in 2000 – first with Lille in France then Switzerland's Basel where he made his name as both an attacking wide midfielder and a forward. Derby County is his current home.

Luke Wilkshire

AGE: 27
POSITION: MIDFIELD
CLUB: DYNAMO MOSCOW
APPEARANCES: 29

Playing for the U23s at the Athens Olympics put Luke in the mix for the Socceroos. He moved from Middlesbrough to Bristol City in 2003 where regular first-team football improved his game, as shown by his impressive displays at the 2006 FIFA World Cup. This tenacious midfielder moved to FC Twente and this year signed with Russian club Dynamo Moscow.

STRIKERS

Bruce Djite

AGE: 21
POSITION: STRIKER
CLUB: GENCLERBIRLIGI
APPEARANCES: 7

Bruce is one of the hottest players coming through the ranks. The former Adelaide United striker was pivotal for our U23s during qualification for the 2008 Olympics and is now making his mark with the senior team. Bruce can hold the ball up and be an effective target man. Expect him to be knocking on the door of regular Socceroo selection in the future.

Josh Kennedy

AGE: 26
POSITION: STRIKER
CLUB: KARLSRUHE
APPEARANCES: 8

Who could forget big Josh's contribution to the Socceroos 2006 FIFA World Cup campaign? After coming on late in the opener against Japan, it was the 192cm striker's presence that unsettled the Japanese defence. He continues to be a dangerous impact player for the Socceroos. Wodonga-born Josh plays for Germany's Karlsruhe.

Scott McDonald

AGE: 25
POSITION: STRIKER
CLUB: CELTIC
APPEARANCES: 9

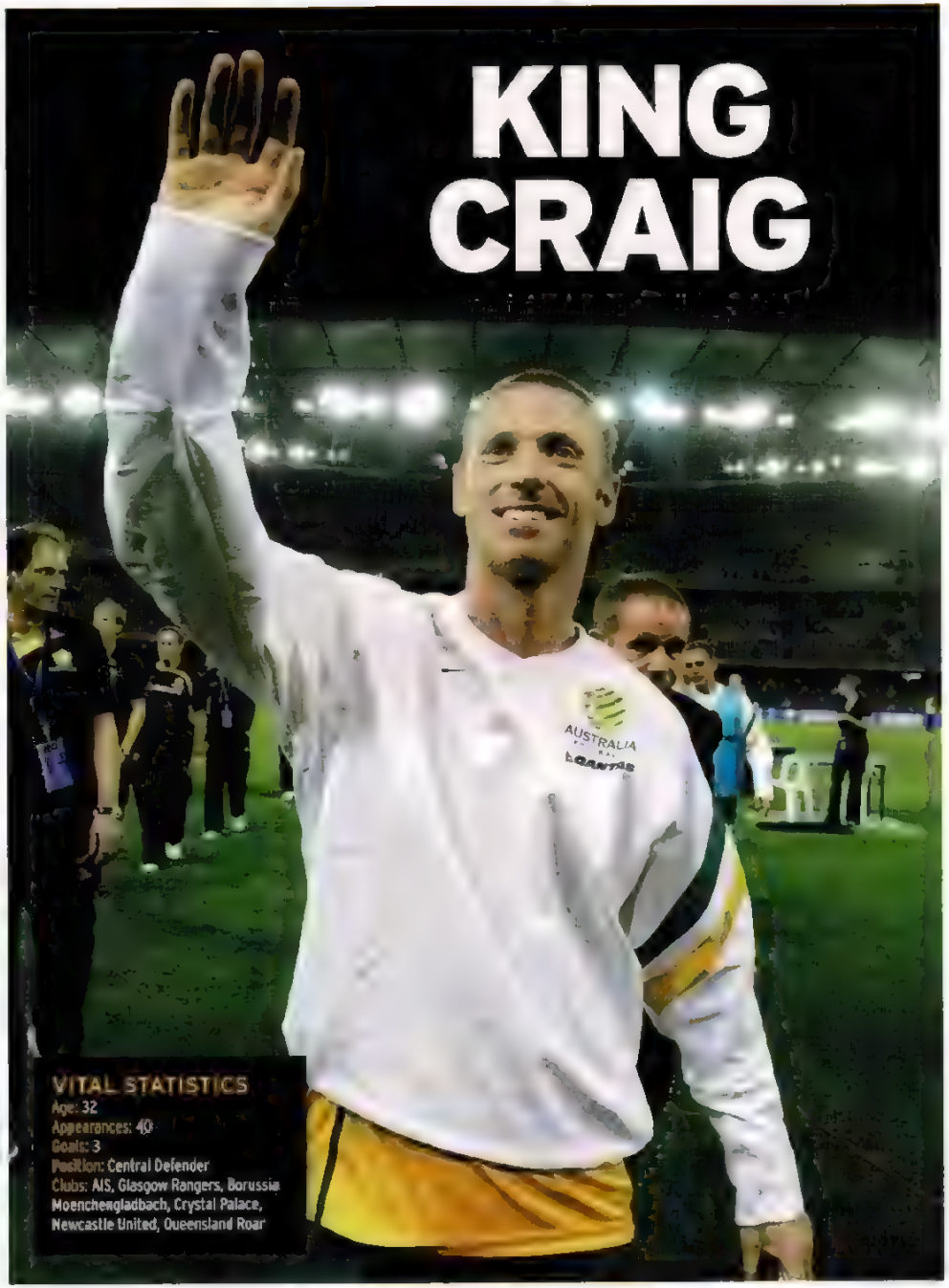
Consistent performances for Motherwell in the Scottish Premier League earned Scott a full international call-up for the Socceroos against Bahrain in 2006. Since then, Melbourne-born Scott has become the hottest Aussie striker in Europe scoring a bagful of goals for Scottish giant Celtic in the league and in the UEFA Champions League over the last year.

Archie Thompson

AGE: 29
POSITION: STRIKER
CLUB: MELBOURNE VICTORY
APPEARANCES: 30

Livewire striker Archie holds the world record for the most goals in an international match, scoring 13 times for the Socceroos against American Samoa in 2001. After a successful stint in Belgium, Archie returned home and has been a consistent and effective scorer in the A-League with his hometown club Melbourne Victory.

KING CRAIG



VITAL STATISTICS
Age: 32
Appearances: 40
Goals: 3
Position: Central Defender
Clubs: AIS, Glasgow Rangers, Borussia Moenchengladbach, Crystal Palace, Newcastle United, Queensland Roar

Aidan Ormond talks to the Queensland and Australian football legend about his return to the international fold and the road to South Africa 2010

He made his name as the under-age, fresh faced tyke in the Young Socceroos of 1993. Now he's the elder statesman of Queensland and Australian football.

In between, he's plied his trade in the English Premier League, Scottish Premier League and played in European competitions too.

The Queenslander has also been a key part of three FIFA World Cup campaigns and has played – and famously scored – at a FIFA World Cup.

As Moore says, he's had a wonderful career. But there's more...

His fourth World Cup campaign began earlier this year before he announced his retirement. It turned out to be a temporary move. Moore, 32, is now officially available for selection

Let's hope we see a lot more of him in the green and gold...

First, could you explain how it came about that you've made yourself available once again for the Socceroos?
Well, basically, we started this season and I've felt fit and I was quite happy with the way I'd finished last season. I felt fit enough so I thought I would make myself available for selection again. There are a few games coming up and I think a lot has been reported, but I've been around a long time and so has Pim [Verbeek], so we spoke and the most important thing for me and for him is for Australia to qualify.

What's your goal?
The most important thing is Australia qualifying for the FIFA World Cup. So, if me making myself available gives Pim another option then great. It's about helping Australia qualify, it's not about me. If he doesn't pick me, so be

WE SAY...

Without doubt Moore is of the most inspirational leaders our national team has had. An Aussie through and through who is still leading the way on and off the pitch with Queensland Roar

it. I may well not get back into the national team.

How has the move home to the A-League influenced your decision?
I've been really pleased since I've come home. The workload in the A-League is obviously a lot less than in Europe and that's really suited me. I've really enjoyed my football and I want to win things. I like to be challenged and we got close last season. I'd like to win something this season. It's a great feeling to reach your targets after a long season.

How do you view the current Socceroo squad, particularly in defence?
It's an 18-month to two-year campaign where a squad gels together over time. And that's what you're seeing Chris Coyne has come in and done well and has very good experience. He's not a young boy and he knows the game. And Jado [Jade North] and Meggsy [Michael Beauchamp], they've come on and it shows we have depth. Experienced defenders have that advantage in their positioning and ability to read the game and not get too flustered, but I've seen some fantastic young boys come through

What's important in developing the Socceroo defensive unit?
Players need time. Things don't happen overnight. The important thing is the team does really well. If I can add some strength to that squad and it's something that Pim wants, he needs, then that's great. But if not, well, so be it. It's an extra option that hopefully helps us get to the World Cup.

What are your memories of last time the Socceroos played at Brisbane Stadium against Iraq in June?
To be honest, we got out of jail that night. It was good result but to be fair they [Iraq] were very dangerous and they had some fantastic opportunities. If we hadn't won I would have been very disappointed, though.

Should Brisbane Stadium now be considered a fortress for the Socceroos?
It's a fantastic stadium. It's on par with some of the best in Europe where they experience a similar atmosphere. The fans are right on you so it makes for a great 'football' stadium. And I'm very fortunate to be playing here with Queensland Roar.

You played against Qatar in February. Your thoughts?
I'm not really surprised, they've done so well this year. With international football there are no easybeats and they are a good side. We got off to a flyer against them in Melbourne last February but there were signs back then that Qatar had a good side. We started the best possible way so it was difficult for them.

Sebastian Quintana looks to be a genuine threat...
On their day, like the Australian team, they can be very good and with a group qualifying situation, you can play more often together and they'll be up for it. No doubt. We have got to be very wary of them.

Have you noticed any varying styles of football from AFC nations?
To be honest I've not seen a great deal of football from central Asian teams so it is hard to say clearly whether or not there is a difference in style from, say, Qatar. Being away from the international scene for a while means I haven't followed it as closely as I would've if I'd still been part of the national team. But there is always plenty of excellent preparation by the Socceroo coaching staff and I'm sure they will be prepared for whatever style is thrown at them during this campaign.

How do you view the evolution of the Socceroos as a team since you began?
We had this cycle of every four years trying to qualify for the World Cup. Now with the qualifying through Asia the profile of the game has just shot up. I don't think we were doing anything

"It's an 18-month to two-year campaign where a squad gels together over time"

"MOORE WAS A FREAK, HE WAS THAT GOOD AS A JUNIOR" CLINT BOLTON

Clint Bolton and Steve Corica are two proud Queenslanders. And both have huge respect for Craig Moore, in fact, Bolton can remember Moore when he was just a kid.

"I've crossed paths with 'Digger' in Queensland since I was about 12. I remember there was this whisper of a player throughout Queensland who played up two age groups. He was just a freak. He was phenomenal. And that was Craig Moore.

"His ability back then was frightening. It just stood out. Even playing with players older than him. And he was a defender back then.

"He played two ages higher than me and we went to the AIS in the same intake of players. So I know him quite well," Bolton recalls.

And Bolton, capped four times for the Socceroos, jokes that Moore has not changed much at all since those early days.

"I remember him being pretty much as he is now, same height, same build. He hasn't changed a bit. And he's a larrikin. He's the type of guy you love playing with. Like Musky [Kevin Muscat] and [Tony] Popovic, these types of guys. You love playing with them because they bring so much composure to the team.

"I've been fortunate enough to play with Digger down at the AIS and I just remember he stood out down there and we had a phenomenal group: John Aloisi, Joe Skoko, Mark Viduka and he was younger than most. He's always stood out.

"We haven't crossed paths recently so it's a bit hard to know how he's going but he's definitely someone who I've enjoyed being around."

Bolton's teammate in the harbour city, Innisfail-born Steve Corica knows that the Roar defender would not have put his hand up for Socceroo selection "if he thought he couldn't do the job".

"He's obviously been watching the games and thinks he can help. Moorey's massive for the Socceroos.

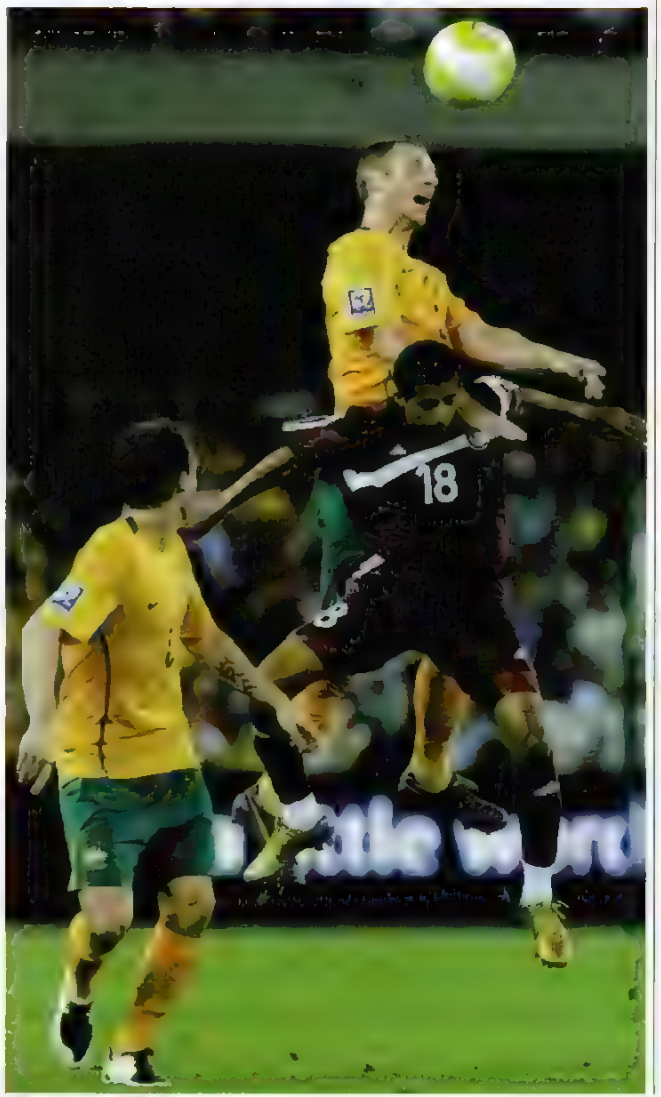
"He's got a lot of experience and to have him at the back for the Socceroos is a huge bonus.

"He's a smart player. He takes up good positions. Experienced players might not be as fast as they used to be but they read the game much better than others.

"And he's always good entertainment too."

LUCAS ON CRAIG...

"He's a personal friend and Craig's well-liked. He's played at the highest level and just having him in the dressing room you get to realise he knows all the tricks of the trade. Out on the park, Craig is 'Steady Eddy'. Having him means we have another weapon for the Socceroos and I'm really pleased he's made himself available should Pim [Verbeek] need him."



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THE NEXT CRAIG MOORE?

How lucky is Luke DeVere? The 19 year old was signed by Frank Farina in the off season and he's had Craig Moore as his partner at the centre of the Queensland Roar defence. Moore's been impressed with his efforts too.

"First and foremost Luke's got a fantastic attitude and he's a great player to work with. As a footballer, he's very strong. He can handle himself extremely well against some of the bigger boys in the A-League."

DeVere's impressed many judges this season with the young defender keeping some of the A-League's best strikers under wraps. But he's still got to plenty to learn.

"The parts of his game that will come in time are distribution. And also it's about finding that right position as a defender. And that will come with experience. He's definitely done extremely well and I think he has a bright future.

"He has the right head for the game and he works hard and takes a lot of the right options," says Moore.

Moore adds that a former Roar defender and a couple of grand final-winning Jets have also caught his eye in this the fourth season of A-League football.

"Sasa [Ognenovski] had a fantastic season with us last year and when he's on his game and plays the way we know he can play he's a very good defender. He can be nasty when he has to be, he's big, strong and good in the air and he can put a ball well.

"I also like the work of Adam Griffiths. I know he gets to play in the centre of midfield sometimes but he's a potential defender who's done well. Alongside players such as Jade [Jade North]

too much different back then. Back in 1997, against Iran at the MCG, we were solid enough and we should've won. We should've gone through but we had a little interruption to the game when a fan ran on and swung off the crossbar and broke the back of the net, and I think that gave them an opportunity to regroup. Goals change games and that's what happened. And for all of us guys who've gone and played in World Cups it's hard on those lads from back then, your Graham Arnolds, Robbie Slaters, Alex Tobins, who never got the chance. I am lucky to have played in a World Cup.

you can call those sorts of games occasions, which are good for the A-League in general.

Your old mate from your Rangers days, Ian Ferguson, is now coach at North Queensland. How will he go?
I played with Fergie for many years at Rangers [in Scotland] and now against him in Australia as a coach at Central Coast. He's now in a position where he can take charge of a team and really do well in his own right. I'm really pleased for him but we'll both be trying to get a result next time we play.

> "I think the best derby will be the Gold Coast United versus Queensland Roar because we're only an hour's drive away from each other"

The Socceroos have signed a deal to play five games in five years in Queensland. How important is that to football in the sunshine state?
It's very important. For however many years Queensland has not really had any meaningful matches played here. The World Cup qualifier against Iraq was a great game and a good crowd so it's nice for Queensland, and of course now with three teams in the A-League. It's nice to spread out the games – Sydney and Melbourne have had their fair share so to finally be in a position to have some meaningful games over the next two years is great.

It should inspire more Queensland kids...
It definitely does. It's always nice to see someone in real life. Television is one thing and we're very fortunate to have such great coverage in this country but seeing the real action is a totally different ball game.

And at A-League level, these same kids can be inspired by these new Queensland derbies with Roar, Gold Coast and North Queensland...
I think the best derby will be the Gold Coast United versus Queensland Roar because we're only an hour's drive away from each other. It'll be tasty. I guess

GENERATIONS

Peter Smith delves into the past and looks to the future of Socceroos hailing from the sunshine state

PAST

FRANK FARINA

With several stints across Europe and Australia, Farina was a travelling advert for Aussie talent

Starting out with Mareeba in North Queensland, Farina's raw talent won him a place at the AIS in 1982. Within the space of 12 months he became a regular for Canberra City in the National League and was leading the attack for the Young Socceroos, scoring in front of 100,000 fans against host-nation Mexico at the FIFA World Youth Cup. A star had indeed been born.

The young Farina was soon snapped up by Australia's then premier club Sydney City, where he played up front alongside John Kosmina.

Several 'Player of the Year' and 'Top Scorer' awards followed before Farina was transferred to Europe, and it was his success alongside the likes of David Mitchell and Eddie Krncevic that helped pave the way for today's stars to be identified and given an opportunity to play in the world's top leagues.

Moving to Belgium's Club Brugge, Farina scored an impressive 45 goals in 75 Belgian first division matches, claiming the league's top scorer crown and the league's top foreign player award.

His achievements attracted the attention of several clubs, resulting in a move to Italy with Bari where Farina became the first Australian to compete in Serie A. After a brief stint at Notts County in England, he enjoyed a fruitful three years in France with Strasbourg and then Lille.

In 1995 he returned to his home state, injecting some much-needed profile into the Brisbane Strikers. The team lifted, finishing in the finals for the first time in 1996 with Farina scoring 20 goals over the season.

Farina became player-coach the following year with immediate success, leading the club to the championship in front of over 40,000 fans in Brisbane.

Farina took the reins of the Socceroos in 1999 and over a six-year period steered the side to a number of ground-breaking wins, including victories over world champions France and also Brazil in 2001, and perhaps most famously of all against England in 2003.

He played a major role in the emergence of the Socceroos in the late 80s, appearing in three FIFA World Cup campaigns and the 1988 Olympic Games, netting a number of crucial goals.

Farina showed that with determination, a good dose of commitment and natural athleticism, a kid from far North Queensland can make it to the very top of the world game.

FUTURE

MICHAEL ZULLO

The Queensland Roar flyer has all the attributes of a future Socceroo star

Queensland Roar speedster Michael Zullo is regarded as one of the brightest prospects in Australia after a dynamic breakthrough season in the A-League earned him a Socceroo call-up earlier this year.

The energetic 19-year-old first came to attention after a number of appearances for the Joeys during their campaign at the FIFA U17 World Cup in Peru, before an 11-month absence through injury resulted in a temporary fall from prominence.

Not to be deterred, the pint-sized rocket turned on many an exciting display for State League outfit Brisbane City, earning himself a two-year deal with the Roar in the process.

It didn't take long for the Brisbane-born youngster to make his mark, scoring the first of a number of crucial goals in his debut against Wellington Phoenix, and ultimately playing an important role in helping the Roar to their first ever appearance in the finals.

The 164cm Zullo carved up defences on a number of occasions with a blinding turn of speed and natural ability on the ball, making him a defender's worst nightmare.

A number of spectacular appearances on the flanks for the Roar over the last season saw Zullo hit the headlines and move to the forefront of the national selectors' minds

Earlier this year he looked set to join an elite group of teenagers to have appeared for the Socceroos when coach Pim Verbeek announced his squad for the friendly international against Singapore. However injury forced Zullo to withdraw from the team just days after it was announced.

There were also call-ups for the Olyroos but a combination of injuries, the timing of matches and competition for spots in a fairly settled squad meant his chances of pressing for a ticket to Beijing were slim.

In signing Zullo, Roar boss Frank Farina was perhaps reminded of his own fledgling career when he saw a spirited youngster with an ability to blitz opposition defences courtesy of a deft touch or a blinding turn of speed.

Farina says that Zullo combines touch with ticker. "He's young, enthusiastic, left-sided and going past people is natural to his game. His strengths are going at defenders, his pace and willingness to work hard for the ball.

"For his size he's aggressive, never pulls out of tackles and works very hard on the pitch. He has some good players here to learn from so if he can knuckle down and work hard then he has a good future."

Wise words indeed and reminiscent of a career that was hewn from a similarly small piece of granite some two decades ago.

The future looks bright for livewire crowd favourite Zullo - as bright as when Farina first burst onto the scene.

Let's hope his career is equally as spectacular as his coach at Roar.

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MY FIRST TIME

CLINT BOLTON

Bundaberg-born Clint debuted for the Socceroos in his home state... but it was still a nervy experience for the Sydney FC keeper

THE GAME
When: June 12, 2000
Where: Gabba, Brisbane
Opposition: Paraguay
Game: Friendly (0-0)

"I remember the feeling before the game... I was absolutely scared! I was in the Socceroos camp with Zeljko "Spider" Kalac, who was such a composed figure and liked to have a laugh before a game. But when it was my turn to pull on the number one jersey, I was really scared. But as is the case with most big games, once you're on the field the nerves are settled.

I just remember the contest itself was pretty tight. Not many opportunities but I recall coming off the ground feeling quite happy with myself and my performance in general.

I remember late in the game there was a one-on-one where I had to make a save, but my biggest memory is when their keeper Jose Luis Chilavert took a free-kick from about 40m out. I was thinking, 'I can't let this one in'. He skied it but that was probably the biggest memory.

Spider didn't say much to me before the game because I don't think he felt he was above me in terms of having to give advice. We were always on the same level even though he's played a lot more games for Australia. He's a mate so I knew that if I needed to speak to him he would've been there to give advice. He didn't act bigger or better than you. The less you talk the less nerves you have I reckon.

He was confident that I was playing at a decent level and that I knew what I was doing. I was in the Australian team so I could handle the job.

My family was in Brisbane at that time and I remember it was pretty sparse in the stadium but I had my mum there and a few friends.

We had Steve Laybutt and Simon Colosimo in our defence but I can't remember who else was there. But I felt content, I'd made a couple of saves and dealt with a number of crosses. I was happy I'd made a contribution.

Spider played the first and third games of that three-game series and I played the second game.

At the time, I was playing for Brisbane Strikers [in the NSL] and there's no doubt you go back to your club with a level of satisfaction knowing that you've done your job against international class players. I had sat on the bench behind Spider for a while so I was happy to get a game under my belt, but I still was itching for more games."

GOLDEN MOMENT

01.06.08

CAPTAIN KEWELL HEADS HOME A BULLET IN BRISSY AS THE ROOS EDGE RIVALS IRAQ

Harry Kewell, Socceroo armband proudly on show, marched out at the head of the Aussie line as the two teams strode out in front of an electric Brisbane Stadium gallery. The sight raised the roof.

Ahead was a date with AFC Asian Cup champions Iraq. At stake, three valuable FIFA World Cup qualifying points in round three. You could sense the stage was set for something special.

And Kewell, as he often does on the big occasion, delivered a golden moment. A super performance leading the strikeline for 76 classic minutes was iced by a craftily executed header just after half-time.

It proved the difference in the 1-0 victory.

The Galatasaray star threatened throughout and after 18 minutes David Carney's laser-like cross found Kewell leaping in front of his defender to send a rocket header straight at Iraqi keeper Noor Sabri. The aerial danger wasn't heeded and Kewell took advantage just two minutes after the restart.

With Mark Bresciano chasing a ball down the right, the Iraqi defence cleared the danger for a throw. From there, Brett Emerton gathered possession near the touchline about 30 metres out and whipped in a teasing cross with just the right amount of curl moving away from Sabri's goal.

Using keen anticipation to position himself in front of a defender, Kewell rose high and with his marker a fraction off, the Australian skipper deftly headed the ball down and into the bottom left-hand corner of the net. Iraq was stunned. Brisbane Stadium erupted.

A few seconds later, Kewell was airborne, punching the cool night sky in joyous celebration. The Socceroos sensed three points.

It was special. A collector's item you might say. We've seen Harry use his boots with devastating effect in big games – just think back to Croatia at the 2006 FIFA World Cup, Thailand at the AFC Asian Cup 2007, and 2003 against England in that infamous 3-1 win – but this was a rarity.

For the almost 50,000 Socceroo fans in Brisbane that night in June, Kewell's first appearance in a green and gold shirt at the ground gave them a night, and goal, to remember. Kewell led the Socceroos like a man possessed. And his body appeared that of a footballer re-energised after too much time blighted by wretched injuries.

As Fox Sports' commentator Simon Hill said at the time, "It's a special goal for Australia's Special K".

Aidan Ormond

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UP NEXT...

BAHRAIN

By Trevor Treharne

With a population well short of a million and no previous FIFA World Cup finals to mention, Bahrain could be misinterpreted as an easy three points. However the Gulf minnows are not to be underestimated. Just ask Japan.

Bahrain beat the regional heavyweights 1-0 in AFC round three World Cup qualifiers earlier this year. And at home in Bahrain on September 6, match day one of round four qualifiers, the Blue Samurai were cruising 3-0 with just minutes left when two late goals almost ruined the day for Takeshi Okada's men, although they held on for a 3-2 win.

A 10-man Bahrain drew with Qatar on match day two in September and that point keeps Bahrain's battlers in with a chance of perhaps a third placed finish in the group.

Al-Ahmar (The Red) will be looking to recapture the form which saw Bahrain finish a surprise fourth in the 2004 AFC Asian Cup. However their progress at last year's Cup was halted at the group stages after a disappointing 2-1 loss to host nation Indonesia in the first game.

This was followed by a shock 2-1 victory over Korea Republic (coached by Pim Verbeek). But a 4-0 loss to a Yasser Al-Qahtani-inspired Saudi Arabia ended Bahrain's run.

The Socceroos first clashed with Bahrain in 2006 during the AFC Asian Cup qualifiers. At home, and playing a 4-5-1, Bahrain took a first half lead through Hussain Ali.

However three goals from Archie Thompson, Joe Skoko and Ahmad Elrich ensured a 3-1 victory for the Socceroos.

The return fixture in Sydney proved less anxious with early goals from John Aloisi and Mark Bresciano setting up a comfortable 2-0 victory.

This campaign, Bahrain rely on the talismanic and talented Ala'a Hubail with his strike partner Ismaeel Abdullatif, while in midfield Mohammed Salmeen, Salman Isa, Sayed Mahmood Jalal and Abdulla Ismail Omar are likely to form the backbone.

Defenders Sayed Mohammed Adnan, Mohammed Hussain, Abdulla Al Marzooqi and Faouzi Aaish, with goalkeeper Sayed Mohammed Jaffar, will look to blunt Harry Kewell and co.

What to expect?
Bahrain will be cautious and look to break up the rhythm of the Socceroos whenever they get the opportunity and hit on the counter-attack.

Danger man: Ala'a Hubail
A young Hubail took the 2004 AFC Asian Cup by storm with a top scoring tally of five goals. Now at 26, the hard-working number nine could prove a real handful.

Bahrain in numbers
66 Current FIFA world ranking
1966 Year Bahrain joined FIFA
35,000 Capacity of Bahrain's stadium

THE SOCCEROO SAYS

A potentially frustrating meeting in store, so a patient approach by the Socceroos will be needed.

BAHRAIN v AUSTRALIA, NOV 19, MANAMA

ROUND FOUR FIFA WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

HOW IT WORKS

It's the final round of AFC qualifiers with the race for the top two automatic spots hotting up - but the intrigue doesn't stop there

This is the round that decides the dream. Four teams - the top two in each group - go through automatically to South Africa 2010. But there's one more spot - and some fascinating match-ups loom for that.

For that final spot, the two third-placed sides in each group play-off with the victor meeting OFC winner New Zealand. Potentially, Australia in group A could meet Iran from group B, its nemesis from the 1997 FIFA World Cup qualifying campaign. How big would that be?

And Aussie coach Pim Verbeek's former side Korea Republic could also play Australia should both finish third.

And what if the final spot for South Africa is decided by a trans-Tasman tussle between the Socceroos and Ricki Herbert's All-Whites?

Drama and intrigue awaits us all.

GROUP A

AUSTRALIA | BAHRAIN | JAPAN | QATAR | UZBEKISTAN

October 15
Australia v Qatar
Japan v Uzbekistan
Bye: Bahrain

November 19
Qatar v Japan
Bahrain v Australia
Bye: Uzbekistan

February 11
Japan v Australia
Uzbekistan v Bahrain
Bye: Qatar

March 28
Japan v Bahrain
Uzbekistan v Qatar
Bye: Australia

April 1
Australia v Uzbekistan
Bahrain v Qatar
Bye: Japan

June 6
Qatar v Australia
Uzbekistan v Japan
Bye: Bahrain

June 10
Japan v Qatar
Australia v Bahrain
Bye: Uzbekistan

June 17
Bahrain v Uzbekistan
Australia v Japan
Bye: Qatar

GROUP B

IRAN | KOREA REP | DPR KOREA | SAUDI ARABIA | UAE

October 15
Korea Republic v UAE
Iran v DPR Korea
Bye: Saudi Arabia

November 19
UAE v Iran
Saudi Arabia v Korea Republic
Bye: DPR Korea

February 11
DPR Korea v Saudi Arabia
Iran v Korea Republic
Bye: UAE

March 28
Iran v Saudi Arabia
DPR Korea v UAE
Bye: Korea Republic

April 1
Korea Republic v DPR Korea
Saudi Arabia v UAE
Bye: Iran

June 6
UAE v Korea Republic
DPR Korea v Iran
Bye: Saudi Arabia

June 10
Iran v UAE
Korea Republic v Saudi Arabia
Bye: DPR Korea

June 17
Saudi Arabia v DPR Korea
Korea Republic v Iran
Bye: UAE

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SHOOT 'N' SCORE!

QUEENSLAND QUICKIES

1. Name the former Socceroo captain who's been named assistant coach at new A-League franchise Gold Coast United?
2. Apart from Gold Coast, name the other new A-League franchise for next season?
3. Who scored the Socceroos' winner the last time the senior national team played at tonight's venue, Brisbane Stadium?
4. What was the crowd attendance for that game?
5. From which AFC nation did the referee come from on that night?
6. Name the Queensland Roar defender who played for Sydney FC in season one of the A-League?
7. How many Socceroo caps are next to the name of Queensland Roar coach Frank Farina?
8. How old is Matildas' Queensland defender Claire Polkinghorne?
9. Complete the name of the following Queensland player recently signed by Roar: T- - - y O - -
10. Name the Queensland Roar player in the photo (left).

ASIAN EXPERTISE

1. Which team did Qatar beat twice in the last round of FIFA World Cup qualifiers?
2. Which nation will host the 2011 AFC Asian Cup?
3. From which AFC nation does star striker Yasser Al-Qahtani come from?
4. Ismael Matar plays for which AFC nation?
5. Name the two sides who played out the 2007 AFC Asian Cup final?
6. And the winning team was?
7. The scorer of the winning goal was?
8. True or false: Socceroo coach Pim Verbeek previously coached China?
9. Maksim Shatskikh plays for which AFC nation?
10. What is the capital of Bahrain?
11. Name the Qatar national team defender originally from Senegal?
12. Japan's Shunsuke Nakamura plays for which famous club in the Scottish Premier League?
13. How many teams automatically qualify for the FIFA World Cup out of each of the round four AFC qualifying groups?
14. True or false: India has qualified for the 2011 AFC Asian Cup?
15. Name the Japanese player in the photo (right).

ANSWERS! **Queensland Quickies** 1: Paul Okon 2: North Queensland FC 3: Harry Kewell 4: 48,578 5: Uzbekistan 6: Andy Packer 7: 67 8: 19 9: Tommy Oar 10: Tim Smits **Asian Expertise** 1: Iraq 2: Qatar 3: Saudi Arabia 4: UAE 5: Iraq and Saudi Arabia 6: Iraq 7: Younis Mahmoud 8: False 9: Uzbekistan 10: Manama 11: Abdullah Koni 12: Celtic 13: Two 14: True 15: Makoto Hasebe

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PABLO BATESON
SOCCEROO THROUGH AND THROUGH

Pablo will be treading every step on the road to South Africa 2010

Interview by Aidan Ormond

AGE: 52
OCCUPATION: Freelance consultant
A-LEAGUE TEAM: Sydney FC
MUSIC: Kylie

What was the first Socceroos match you went to?
It was against Santos of Brazil in 1973 at the Sydney Sports Ground. Pele played for Santos that day against the Socceroos. It was 2-2 and I went with my Dad. I've been following the Socceroos ever since. It's in my blood.

Describe your passion for the green and gold...
That's the word... passion. We know Australian players give their all with a commitment to the country before club and money. It's a shared passion with us. We're there with them all the way. The goal is South Africa. It's gonna be a big party in South Africa if we make it.

So, how was Tashkent?
Uzbekistan is the best away trip for a Socceroo game anywhere in the world. I can say that unreservedly. The planning for it was very complex but the rewards were immense. There were about 50 independent fans and the green and gold army who travelled to Tashkent.

Once we got there we were treated so well – the hospitality and warmth blew us away. And Tashkent is such a wonderful place. The FFA were great to us when we were there, in particular Gary Moretti the Socceroos team manager. And we also suffered like the players with a bug. I guess it's just one of those things. It's not just about the football, it's the cultural experiences of these trips and side trips. It's a healthy addiction.

Tell us what happened when that final whistle blew?
It was just spontaneous. The Australian players came over after the final whistle and they were giving us shirts, boots, you name it. Just the sheer joy – and relief we got the win – was something we shared. It was a momentous night. We got treated with a police escort to and from the ground. And the home fans responded to us really well. It was the best atmosphere since the Uruguay home game in 2005. It was electric right up to the actual kick-off in Tashkent.

Bahrain in November should be another big trip...
I'm going to fly to Bahrain and obviously there are others coming from Australia. We've got a guy called Michael Rumbold from the green and gold army, he's like a Middle East ambassador for us and he's going to coordinate things in Bahrain and do the ground work over there. With the ex-pat Aussies in nearby Qatar and Dubai and those in Bahrain, we expect around 1000 fans to be in Bahrain. We're trying to coordinate things from here and we'll have guys over there. So log onto the green and gold army website (www.ggarmy.com) for more info. After, I'm going to fly on to the UK to see some EPL matches too.

Did you go to Germany 2006?
No! I had to sell my tickets as I had to go to hospital. So I watched the whole thing from a hospital bed in Sydney. So South Africa 2010 is unfinished business for me.